

Work is possible

HELPING BENEFICIARIES MAKE INFORMED
DECISIONS ABOUT WORK



Presented by Easter Seals Nebraska

LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- Paid employment and SSA disability benefits are NOT mutually exclusive
- It is possible to work and keep Medicaid or Medicare in almost every case
- It is possible to work and come out ahead financially even if benefits are reduced
- Support is available through Easter Seals Nebraska

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WORK AND BENEFITS



- I will lose my SSI/SSDI check when I start work.
- If I work, I will lose my Medicare and/or Medicaid.
- If I don't get an SSI check, I will lose Medicaid.
- If I start working, SSA will decide that I am not disabled anymore.
- If I lose my benefits, I cannot get them back.



Social Security Basics

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS PROGRAMS



- **Social Security Disability Insurance:**
Provides cash benefits to disabled or blind individuals who are “insured” by the worker’s contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund.
- **Supplemental Security Income:**
Cash assistance payments to aged, blind, and disabled individuals who have limited income and resources.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY PROGRAMS



Title II Social Security Disability Benefits

- Funded by the Social Security trust fund
- Entitlement program based on insured status (work history)
- Insures the worker, the worker’s widow/widower, and worker’s disabled adult child
- Medicare Part A, B, and D eligibility after 24 months

Title XVI Supplemental Security Income

- Funded by federal tax dollars, not the SSA trust fund
- Needs based program for the aged, blind, and disabled who have limited income and resources
- Comes with eligibility for Medicaid
- “Payer of last resort”

SSA DISABILITY DEFINITION - ADULT



- Inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity
- Because of medically determinable physical or mental impairment
- That can be expected to result in death, or that lasts or is expected to last at least 12 months

2013 SGA AMOUNTS



- Wage Employment:
 - Countable earnings over \$1040/month
- Self-Employment:
 - Net earnings over \$1040/month AND significant services
- Individuals who are blind:
 - Countable earnings over \$1740/month

WHAT ARE WORK INCENTIVES?



- Work Incentives are provisions that have been enacted at the state and federal level to assist people with disabilities to move toward greater independence by becoming employed.
- By using work incentives, individuals can enter or re-enter the workforce while protecting their eligibility for cash benefits and/or healthcare benefits until they can become self-sufficient.



SSI Work Incentives

SSI key points – cash benefit



- A little less than half of the income you earn affects your cash benefit → the individual is going to come out financially ahead when working in the SSI program
- Almost all of your unearned income affects your cash benefit

EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION



- INCOME EXCLUSIONS:
 - General Income Exclusion (\$20) – Everyone on SSI is entitled to exclude the first \$20 of income, whether is earned or unearned.
 - Earned Income Exclusion (\$65) – Beneficiaries who have more than \$20 earnings from work can exclude an additional \$65.
- After these two income exclusions are applied, SSA counts one-half of the remaining earned income.

EXAMPLE SSI CALCULATION

Josh receives the full FBR. He earns \$665 gross wages per month. He is single and lives alone. He has no other income.

Gross Earned Income	\$665	Federal Benefit Rate (Single)	\$710
- General Income Exclusion	\$20	- Countable Earned Income	\$290
= Remainder	\$645	= Adjusted SSI payment	\$420
	\$645	Adjusted SSI Payment	\$420
- Earned Income Exclusion	\$65	+ Gross Earned Income	\$665
= Remainder	\$580	= Total Financial Outcome	\$1085
	\$580		
Divided by 2	/2		
=Countable Earned Income	\$290		

STUDENT EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION



- Unmarried and under age 22
- Regularly attending school (8 hours a week in college and 12 hours a week in grades 7-12, training course 12- 15 hours per week)
- Exclusion cannot exceed \$1,730 per month or \$6,960 per year in 2013

IMPAIRMENT RELATED WORK EXPENSES



- Expense a person incurs that enables them to work
- Five criteria:
 - Related to a documented disability
 - Needed in order to work
 - Paid by the beneficiary and not reimbursed (keep receipts!)
 - Expense is reasonable (within the community)
 - Expense paid in month person was working

IMPAIRMENT RELATED WORK EXPENSES



Items or services that may be claimed as Impairment Related Work Expenses:

- Job Coaching
- Medications and Medical Services
- Work-related Equipment
- Attendant Care Services
- Individual and Group Therapy
- Transportation Costs
- Residential Modifications
- And More!

BLIND WORK EXPENSES



For individuals meet the statutory blindness definition, any work related items that are paid out of pocket can be excluded (Blind Work Expense)

Examples include:

- Guide dog expenses
- Income taxes
- Lunch
- Transportation



**Plan to
Achieve Self-
Support
(PASS)**

- Set aside or "exclude" income or resources necessary to achieve a specific work goal approved by SSA
- The income you set aside will not count in SSI calculation
- Plan must include realistic work goal, specific savings plan, and sequential steps to lead to employment (can include school)
- I.e. Tuition, Fees, Books, Transportation, Computer, Start-up Costs for Self-Employment
- Good academic progress required if school is in the plan - grade reports submitted

SSI key points – healthcare



- In 2013, you can earn up to \$37,017 and keep your Medicaid in Nebraska! (1619b)
- In some cases, you can earn more than that or you may be able to purchase Medicaid
- This provision can only be used when wages alone stop the cash benefit
- The person must depend on Medicaid to continue working

Title II Work Incentives



TITLE II KEY POINTS



- A person must have reached insured status to be eligible for this disability program, or be the child or spouse of an insured worker
- This program is all about SGA! All or nothing cash benefit
- How income affects the cash benefit depends on where a person is at in his/her work history AND if any SGA work incentives apply

THREE PHASES IN TITLE II



Trial Work Period (9 months)

Extended Period of Eligibility (36 months)

Expedited Reinstatement (60 months)

TRIAL WORK PERIOD



- Allows a person to test their ability to work without jeopardizing cash or medical benefits
- Beneficiaries receive their full disability cash benefit regardless of how much they earn, as long as they continue to have a disabling impairment
- Beneficiaries are entitled to 9 TWP months (must occur within a 5 year window)
- 2013 Trial Work Amount: \$750/month

EXTENDED PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY



- 36 consecutive months immediately following the 9th TWP month
- During this period, beneficiaries are due cash payments for months their earnings are below SGA and not due a payment for months when they work above SGA
- A new application is not required to reinstate cash benefit if individuals earnings go back below SGA

IRWE EXAMPLE



Mark earns \$1150 in wages during this month.
He also paid \$200 in prescription co-pays this month.

\$1150 (earnings)
- \$200 (IRWE)
\$950 (value of work)

SUBSIDY AND SPECIAL CONDITIONS



Supports a person receives on the job that may result in them receiving more pay than the actual value of the services performed.

Subsidy: Support provided by the employer – Extra Supervision, Fewer tasks, Lower productivity level

Special Conditions: Support provided by someone other than the employer, such as VR or a Community Service Agency – Job coach

TITLE II - HEALTHCARE



- A person receiving Title II disability benefits (SSDI, CDB, DWB) is entitled to Medicare after a 24 month waiting period

EXTENDED PERIOD OF MEDICARE COVERAGE



If the beneficiary earns enough to stop their cash benefit and be terminated from the Title II program, he/she is eligible for Medicare for at least 93 months after the last month of the Trial Work Period – sometimes longer. After EPMC months are exhausted, the beneficiary may be able to purchase Medicare after that.

*Not eligible if medically recovered

TITLE II AND MEDICAID



Some Title II beneficiaries will also qualify for Medicaid in Nebraska under certain programs in addition to their Medicare. This is a determination made by Nebraska DHHS and an application must be filed with them. Eligibility, income, and resource requirements usually apply.

**100% Federal Poverty Level (sometimes with a Spend Down or Share of Cost) or Medicaid Insurance for Worker's with Disabilities

EXPEDITED REINSTATEMENT



A person can request Expedited Reinstatement of Benefits within 5 years (60 months) after their benefits are terminated due to work above SGA.

- Benefits must have been terminated due to work activity
- Must be same or related to the original disabling condition
- The individual must not be performing SGA at the time of the request

OTHER STATE AND FEDERAL BENEFITS



- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Energy Assistance
- Housing Assistance
- Earned Income Tax Credit, Unemployment Insurance, Worker's Compensation



Work Incentives & Benefits Counseling

Introduction

WHAT IS BENEFIT ANALYSIS & HOW CAN IT HELP?



- A benefit analysis is a person-centered, individualized analysis of the effects that work and other life situations will have on disability benefit programs.
- Beneficiaries can gain an understanding of the impact employment will have on benefits received.

**GETTING PAST THE
MISCONCEPTIONS.
WORK IS POSSIBLE!!**



- I will lose my SSI/SSDI check when I start work.
 - Trial Work Period, Extended Period of Eligibility, IRWE, Subsidy/Special Conditions, Earned Income Exclusion, BWE
- If I work, I will lose my Medicare and/or Medicaid.
 - 1619(b), Extended Medicare, MIWD
- If I don't get an SSI check, I will lose Medicaid.
 - 1619(b)

WORK IS POSSIBLE!



- If I start working, SSA will decide that I am not disabled anymore.
 - Trial Work Period, Extended Period of Eligibility, Ticket to Work, IRWE, Subsidy/Special Conditions
- If I lose my benefits, I cannot get them back.
 - Expedited Reinstatement



Ticket to Work Program

WHAT IS TICKET TO WORK?



- Voluntary employment program for people with disabilities who are interested in obtaining or advancing in employment to gain greater independence and self-sufficiency
- Provides beneficiaries more choices and opportunities for receiving employment services
- Must be 18 through 64 years of age and receiving benefits based on the adult definition of disability to be eligible

WHY USE THE TICKET?



- SSA will not initiate a medical continuing disability review while the Ticket is "in use" and progress is being made toward the work goal
- Employment Networks provide career preparation, job placement assistance and retention supports.
- Nebraska Ticket to Work offers benefits planning services and community resource coordination to assigned Ticket holders.

800-471-6425 x 1

REPORTING INCOME



- Adopt a system for reporting income by the 10th of the month (for the previous month)
- Individuals should make copies of paystubs and receipts and keep them in a secure place
- The original paystub and receipts are submitted to SSA claims representative for each respective program (SSI/SSDI)

CLOSING



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